April 26th, 2012

Dear Decker 5th Graders,

Congratulations! If you are reading this, you are literate. *Literacy* is the ability to read. It is probably the most important thing you will learn in school. Being able to read is an incredible advantage that can help you do well in school, learn about things that you are interested in, and find a job that you enjoy someday.

I have something important to share with you. Not everyone can read as well as you do. In fact, there are many adults who struggle with things like filling out a job application, understanding a doctor’s written instructions, or reading a newspaper. This inability to read is called *illiteracy*.

I am the Community Relations Coordinator at an organization called *El Buen Samaritano.* Part of what I do is coordinate hundreds of volunteers who help do all kinds of great things. One thing that the volunteers do is help teach people, students like you and adults, how to read. The problem I have is that I know that there are many people who need to know more about how being a good reader can help them have a better life for themselves and the people they care about. I need your help.

I know you have heard people telling you to read for what seems like forever. Before you help me, you need to know that literacy is important for *you*! Not because your parents told you it was important. Not because your teacher told you it would help you. *I want you to believe it because you know that it’s true!*

After you do your research, I want you to create brochures that can help people better understand how important reading is and what they can do to learn how to become better readers. The brochure needs to include information about these things:

* Is reading important?
* What is reading effectively and why is it important?
* How does literacy affect HDI?
* What can students do to increase their reading level?
* What can adults do to increase their reading level?
* Where can people who want to learn how to read go to learn?

I have heard about the great work you have done all year. Mr. Herrington talks about you all the time—I know about the wildfire project you did this year, the adaptation project, and I know how hard you all worked to get prepared for your STAAR tests. That’s why I think you are the students I need for this special project. Your work will make a difference in the lives of people in our community. I can’t wait to see what you come up with.

Kind regards,

Claudia Herrington

Community Relations Coordinator

El Buen Samaritano